h Dickson G-8 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Joys of Cold Weather

there is a stir in the Badawin world. Suhail (Canopus) has also been* seen, low down in the southern horizon, which to the Badawin means the end of the dread summer, for man and beast then need less to drink. Even the blood grows cooler of a sudden.

A general cheerfulness now takes hold of the Badawin tent-dweller. He has safely weathered one more dread summer, the life-giving rains are coming and with them abundance once again. He joyfully packs up his belongings and by the 15th of October is ready to move. The end of the month sees him gone, rain or no rain. At first he does not go too far from water, for his camels, sheep and mares must still be watered frequently.

With the first fall of rain, however, he is gone on his great annual migration, or, to be more accurate, his grand circular tour. The various sections of the tribe now move together or follow each other from grazing ground to grazing ground, till they have systematically passed over and eaten down all the *'urfaj*, *nassi* and *hamdh* grasses that the rains have brought in their train. Should rains be delayed in a particular area, the tribe skip it and pass on to where the country has become green. The night lightning and the heavy bank of clouds seen of an evening far away on the horizon are their surest guides.

Certain areas are known to be nearly always good in autumn, and to these the shaikhs will usually take their own best camels with them.

This moving in the wake of the grazing is spread over November, December, January, February, March and April, till by May all nomad households are once more beginning to converge slowly on to water. It is a sad period, this having to go, so to speak, "home again" after the glorious annual holiday. During the migration months the tribal tents change ground about every ten days, both for sanitary reasons and because the grass has been eaten up—so the moves are slow, leisurely and pleasant. Nor are distances to the next camp great. It is a period of joy for all, women renew their winter garments, make *lahm*, wear their best frocks and amuse themselves among the flowers. The better-off men hawk the lesser bustard (*hubara*), hunt gazelle

* In Najd Canopus is usually seen between 1st September and 10th September. In Kuwait if the sky is clear it is seen very close after the 20th September, and at about 5.30 a.m., very low down in the south over the Bristi Gate.

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517 (*shaikh*) and generally lead a lazy grouping life, fattening themselves
224 on fresh *laban*, camel's milk and dates. Should the tribe be at war,
262 then of course this utopian existence *is* at once changed, and the tribe
772 moves from ground to ground, concentrated closely and prepared
for all eventualities. The Badawin's wonderful methods for obtaining
[202] and passing on news, especially of an alarming nature, now come
into play. If danger is in the air, he knows it days and even weeks
before, and takes necessary precautions. It almost seems as if he were
able to smell danger. Then he gets out his rifle and burnishes it and
622 assembles his cartridges. The shaikh now, of course, leads the tribe on
its march to fresh grazing and selects every site for the tribal camp.
His word is law when the safety of the community is at stake.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SHAIKH AND HOW IT IS MAINTAINED

622 No tribal shaikh holds his position simply because his father was
157 the shaikh before him. In other words, the shaikhship does not neces-
183 sarily pass from father to eldest son. It does, however, remain in the
family, whether it be the shaikhship of a tribal section or that of all-
paramount shaikh, the leader of the whole tribe. For instance, the
shaikh of the Murair tribe must always be chosen from the Al Dushan
or royal clan; but the heir apparent who wants to succeed his father
and become shaikh after him must prove:

that he has the necessary courage;
that he has powers of leadership;
that he has *Saʿdi* or luck.

777 The Badawin has no use for a man having courage and leadership
622 in plenty if *Saʿdi* is lacking. A lucky general is what the tribesman
157 wants in war, and, still more important, he wants a lucky shaikh in
peace, for to him the whole daily round and welfare of the tribe is
bound up in this word *Saʿdi*. The great Ibn Saʿud, the present Lord
of Saʿudi Arabia, owes his greatness to his having been blessed with
a large quantity of *Saʿdi*, or so says and believes every Badawin of
Arabia. He has other notable attributes, of course, but these cannot
be compared with the all-embracing Luck.
622 The shaikh cannot, on the other hand, say to the tribe that he